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A Thousand Splendid Suns

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**Summary**: Laila is beside herself with joy and the two of them spend time together sharing stories about their lives. At dinner that night Zalmai tells Rasheed about the visitor. He figures out that it was Tariq and is furious. He yells at Laila and calls her a whore, saying that he knew Aziza was not his all along. He takes Zalmai upstairs, and then comes down to beat his wives. He attacks Laila with his belt and then turns on Mariam. The women try to fight back, but Rasheed was on top of Laila, choking her. Mariam runs out to the shed, grabs the shovel, and kills Rasheed with it. The two women tend to their wounds and try to think of a plan. Mariam tells Laila to take Aziza and Zalmai and leave. Laila doesn’t want to leave Mariam behind because she knows that she will be put to death for murdering her husband. Finally, Mariam convinces her to go, and Laila tells Mariam that she will see her again and come back to testify. Laila, Aziza, and Zalmai leave and Mariam is taken to a women’s prison. She declines her right to witnesses and confesses to killing her husband during the trial. After ten days in jail, she is executed.

Laila and Tariq take the children to Murree to stay in Sawyer’s hotel. They were married the same day. Laila tells Aziza that Tariq is her real father, and Zalmai still has trouble adjusting to his new father figure. Laila decides that she wants to return to Kabul now that the living conditions are suitable, her reason being that Kabul is home to her. First she stops at Heart to see Mullah Faizullah’s son. He takes her to see Mariam’s kolba. Before she leaves he gives her a box from Jalil Khan that was supposed to be for Mariam. She opens the box and finds a tape of *Pinocchio*, but she doesn’t understand its significance. There is also an apology letter to Mariam and some money. Back home in Kabul, the children are enrolled in school and Laila becomes a teacher at the orphanage that Aziza once attended. The story ends with the news of Laila’s third child. She implies that, if the baby is a girl, it will be named Mariam.

**Analysis**: I think Mariam and Laila’s actions in the beginning of this section were surprising, but also rather predictable. The act of killing your husband with a shovel is quite astonishing, but I feel like all readers would know that something like that had to happen. Mariam and Laila, although stuck in a bad situation for years, were each strong individually, and together knew that they would not put up with that much abuse from Rasheed. As the beatings went up in numbers, so did their desire to put a stop to it and end their misery. When Mariam saw the chance to finally end what had been almost twenty years of cruelty, she took it wholeheartedly. I also think that it is somewhat unfair that Laila continues her life with the man that she loves, while Mariam is executed. It really could have been either of the two women that finally ended it. In my opinion Mariam had the more difficult life while under the reign of Rasheed, especially towards the beginning of Laila and Rasheed’s relationship when Mariam is cast aside. I don’t believe that it should have been Laila that was killed instead, but I think that Mariam deserved a new life just as much if not more than Laila.

**Application**: At the end of the novel, Laila achieves what she had wanted all her life. Being married to Tariq with two children and living in a safe city seems like perfection compared to her life with Rasheed. Although Laila is happy with her new life, she cannot be completely blissful because of all the pain and suffering that took place to get there. For Laila, there are the memories of the abuse from Rasheed and the absence of her parents and Mariam. Tariq also has recollections of his own that cause him pain. The end result was an ideal life for them both, but the atmosphere is a great deal different from the joyous, carefree times of their childhood together. Tariq and Laila’s relationship shows the pursuit of love and that the road to happiness is never easy.